

July 14, 2010  
1420 East 6th Ave.  
P.O. Box 200701  
Helena, MT 59620-0701

Environmental Quality Council  
Montana Department of Environmental Quality  
Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks  
    Fisheries Bureau  
    Endangered Species Coordinator  
    Native Species Coordinator, Fisheries Division  
    Missoula Office  
Montana State Library, Helena  
MT Environmental Information Center  
Montana Audubon Council  
Montana Wildlife Federation  
Wayne Hadley, 1016 Eastside Road, Deer Lodge, MT 59722  
Montana River Action Network, 304 N 18<sup>th</sup> Ave., Bozeman, MT 59715  
Granite Conservation District, P.O. Box 926, Philipsburg, MT 59858  
U.S. Army Corp of Engineers, Helena  
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Helena  
State Historic Preservation Office, Helena  
Clark Fork Coalition, Box 7593, Missoula, MT 59807  
Mike Burnbaum, 800 Speedway Avenue, Missoula, MT 59802  
Jack Strain, 14200 Hellgate Lane, Clinton, MT 59825  
Steve Gerdes, Pintlar Ranger District, 88 Business Loop, Philipsburg, MT 59858

Ladies and Gentlemen:

Please find enclosed an Environmental Assessment (EA) prepared for the Future Fisheries Improvement Program. The Program tentatively plans to provide partial funding to a project calling to replace two undersized culverts located on Wyman Gulch, a tributary to South Boulder Creek in the Flint Creek drainage, with larger metal corrugated arch pipes. These culvert replacements would complement 7 additional road crossing improvements concurrently being undertaken by the Beaverhead Deerlodge National Forest. The intent of the project is to restore migratory connectivity for bull trout and non-hybridized westslope cutthroat trout. These proposed culvert replacements are located approximately 3 miles south of the community of Maxville in Granite County.

Please submit any comments that you have by 5:00 P.M., August 15, 2010 to the Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks in Helena at the address listed above. Funding for this project through the Future Fisheries Improvement Program is contingent upon approval being granted by the Fish, Wildlife and Parks Commission. If you have any questions, feel free to contact me at (406) 444-2432. Please note that this draft EA will be considered as final if no substantive comments are received by the deadline listed above.

Sincerely,  
Mark Lere, Program Officer  
Habitat Protection Section  
Fisheries Bureau  
e-mail: [mlere@mt.gov](mailto:mlere@mt.gov)

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT  
Fisheries Division  
Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks  
Wyman Gulch Culvert Replacement Project

General Purpose: The 1995 Montana Legislature enacted statute 87-1-272 through 273 that directs the Department to administer a Future Fisheries Improvement Program. The program involves providing funding for physical projects to restore degraded fish habitat in rivers and lakes for the purpose of improving wild fisheries. The legislature established an earmarked funding account to help accomplish this goal. Additionally, the 1999 Montana Legislature amended statute sections 87-1-273, 15-38-202 and Section 5, Chapter 463, Laws of 1995 to create a bull trout and cutthroat trout enhancement program. The program calls for the enhancement of bull trout and cutthroat trout through habitat restoration, natural reproduction and reductions in species competition by way of the Future Fisheries Program.

The Future Fisheries Improvement Program is proposing to provide partial funding to a project calling for the replacement of two undersized culverts located at existing road crossings on Wyman Gulch, a tributary to South Boulder Creek in the Flint Creek drainage, with larger corrugated metal arch pipes. The intent of the project is to enhance upstream fish passage at these road crossings to improve migratory connectivity for bull trout and genetically pure westslope cutthroat trout. The project sites are located approximately 3 miles south of the community of Maxville in Granite County.

I. Location of Project: This project will be conducted on two existing road crossings on Wyman Gulch located within Township 8 North, Range 13 West, Sections 21 and 28 in Granite County (Attachment 1).

II. Need for the Project: One goal within Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks six-year operations plan for the fisheries program is to “restore and enhance degraded fisheries habitats” by implementing habitat restoration projects and administering the Future Fisheries Improvement Program to restore important habitats on private and public lands. This proposed project would help meet this goal.

The Boulder Creek drainage, including Wyman Gulch, is only one of three strongholds for bull trout located in the upper Clark Fork basin upstream of Rock Creek. The drainage also supports non-hybridized westslope cutthroat trout. Nine culvert crossings in the drainage have been identified by the Beaverhead Deerlodge National Forest as creating restrictions for the movement of native fish and other aquatic organisms. On Wyman Gulch, two of the road crossings are associated with private in-holdings that are used to gain access to hunting cabins (Attachment 2). These culverts currently are drastically undersized, consisting of 24-inch in diameter corrugated plastic pipes. Both of these existing culverts are at risk for breaching and both impede upstream passage for aquatic organisms. The Future Fisheries Program is proposing to provide partial funding to replace these two private culverts. The remaining seven culverts identified for replacement are part of a fish passage enhancement project being led by the Pintler Ranger District.

III. Scope of the Project:

This proposed project would replace two existing undersized culverts with larger metal arch pipes. The existing culverts consist of 24 inch in diameter plastic pipes. The proposed replacements would consist of 7 foot by 10 foot metal corrugated arch pipes approximately 40 feet in length. The new arch pipes would be buried into the stream substrate in a manner where the substrate inside the pipes would be formed into bankfull channel cross sections. The sizing of these culverts is being based on a stream simulation approach, with the goal to maintain a natural cross section within each of the culvert structures. This proposed project would complement the fish passage enhancement efforts being undertaken by the US Forest Service in other parts of the drainage and would be critical for providing upstream passage for all life history stages of native fish from Boulder Creek through South Boulder Creek and upstream through Wyman Gulch. This project, not including the US Forest Service efforts, is expected to cost \$39,270.00. Of this total, the Future Fisheries Improvement Program would be contributing up to \$38,070.00. The remainder of the funding would come from in-kind services provided by the Clark Fork Coalition.

IV. Environmental Impact Checklist:

Please see attached checklist.

V. Explanation of Impacts to the Physical Environment

1. Terrestrial and aquatic life and habitats.

Replacing two existing undersized culverts with properly sized arch pipes, especially in association with fish passage enhancement efforts concurrently being undertaken by the US Forest Service, would create more stable stream crossings that would enhance upstream passage for all aquatic organisms. Migratory connectivity for bull trout and westslope cutthroat trout would be improved.

2. Water quantity, quality and distribution.

Short-term increases in turbidity will occur during project construction. To minimize turbidity, the operation of equipment in the active stream channel will be minimized to the extent practicable. The Department of Environmental Quality will be contacted to determine narrative conditions required to meet short-term water quality standards and protect aquatic biota (318 authorization). A 310 permit (Montana Natural Streambed and Land Preservation Act) will be obtained from the local conservation district and the U.S. Army Corp of Engineers will be contacted to determine the need to meet 404 provisions of the Clean Water Act.

3. Geology and soil quality, stability and moisture.

Soils along the stream margin would be temporarily disturbed during construction. All disturbed areas would be re-vegetated with a native grass seed mix.

5. Aesthetics.

In the short term, aesthetics would be adversely impacted due to ground disturbance and the

presence of heavy construction equipment.

7. Unique, endangered, fragile or limited environmental resources.

Enhancing migratory connectivity in Boulder Creek, South Boulder Creek and Wyman Gulch is expected to benefit both bull trout and westslope cutthroat trout populations. Because Wyman Gulch supports bull trout, the proposed project would be included in Montana Fish, Wildlife and Park's Section 6 conservation plan with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

9. Historic and archaeological sites

The two sites have been previously disturbed by the construction and maintenance of the existing stream crossings. As a result, there is a very low likelihood that cultural properties will be impacted by the proposed project. Should cultural materials be inadvertently discovered during the project, the State Historic Preservation Office will be contacted and the site will be investigated.

VI. Explanation of Impacts on the Human Environment.

14. Transportation networks & traffic flows.

The two road crossings are located on private driveways that provide access to private hunting cabins. As such, public transportation networks and traffic flows would not be interrupted.

VII. Discussion and Evaluation of Reasonable Alternatives.

1. No Action Alternative

If no funding is provided, the applicant would have to either seek other sources of funding to complete the project or these private road crossings on Wyman Gulch will continue to act as partial barriers for upstream movement of aquatic organisms and migratory connectivity in Wyman Gulch would remain impaired.

2. The Proposed Alternative

The proposed alternative is designed to provide partial funding to aid in replacing two existing undersized culverts on Wyman Gulch with metal corrugated arch pipes. The new crossing would be designed to meet stream simulation guidelines to enhance upstream passage for all aquatic organisms. This work would complement the associated stream crossing enhancement work being undertaken in the Boulder Creek drainage by the US Forest Service. The project is expected to improve migratory connectivity for bull trout and genetically pure westslope cutthroat trout.

VIII. Environmental Assessment Conclusion Section

1. Is an EIS required? No.

We conclude from this review that the proposed activities will have a positive impact on the physical and human environment.

2. Level of public involvement.

The proposed project was reviewed and supported by the public review panel of the Future Fisheries Improvement Program. The Fish, Wildlife and Parks Commission also will review the proposed project and funding will be contingent upon their approval. The Environmental Assessment (EA) is being distributed to all individuals and groups listed on the cover letter. The EA also will be published on Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks webpage: [fwp.mt.gov](http://fwp.mt.gov).

3. Duration of comment period?

Public comment will be accepted through 5:00 PM on August 15, 2010

4. Person responsible for preparing the EA.

Mark Lere, Program Officer  
Habitat Protection Section  
Fisheries Bureau  
Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks  
1420 East 6th Avenue  
Helena, MT 59620  
Telephone: (406) 444-2432  
e-mail: [mlere@mt.gov](mailto:mlere@mt.gov)

**MONTANA DEPARTMENT OF FISH, WILDLIFE AND PARKS**  
1420 E 6th Ave, PO BOX 200701, Helena, MT 59620-0701  
(406) 444-2535

**ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT**

Project Title Wyman Gulch Culvert Replacement Project

Division/Bureau Fisheries Bureau -Future Fisheries Improvement

Description of Project The Future Fisheries Improvement Program is proposing to provide partial funding to a project calling for replacing two undersized culverts located on Wyman Gulch with larger corrugated metal arch pipes. The intent of the project is to enhance upstream passage for all aquatic organisms and ultimately improving migratory connectivity within the Boulder Creek, South Boulder Creek and Wyman Gulch drainages. The project sites are located approximately 3 miles south of the community of Maxville in Granite County.

POTENTIAL IMPACT ON PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

	MAJOR	MODERATE	MINOR	NONE	UNKNOWN	COMMENTS ON ATTACHED PAGES
1. Terrestrial & aquatic life and habitats			X			X
2. Water quality, quantity & distribution			X			X
3. Geology & soil quality, stability & moisture			X			X
4. Vegetation cover, quantity & quality				X		
5. Aesthetics			X			X
6. Air quality				X		
7. Unique, endangered, fragile, or limited environmental resources			X			X
8. Demands on environmental resources of land, water, air & energy				X		
9. Historical & archaeological sites				X		X

POTENTIAL IMPACTS ON THE HUMAN ENVIRONMENT

	MAJOR	MODERATE	MINOR	NONE	UNKNOWN	COMMENTS ON ATTACHED PAGES
1. Social structures & mores				X		
2. Cultural uniqueness & diversity				X		
3. Local & state tax base & tax revenue				X		
4. Agricultural or industrial production				X		
5. Human health				X		
6. Quantity & distribution of community & personal income				X		
7. Access to & quality of recreational and wilderness activities			X			X
8. Quantity & distribution of employment				X		
9. Distribution & density of population & housing				X		
10. Demands for government services				X		
11. Industrial & commercial activity				X		
12. Demands for energy				X		
13. Locally adopted environmental plans & goals				X		
14. Transportation networks & traffic flows				X		X

Other groups or agencies contacted or which may have overlapping jurisdiction Granite Conservation District, US Fish and Wildlife Service, US Army Corp of Engineers, Montana Department of Environmental Quality, State Historic Preservation Office

Individuals or groups contributing to this EA Will McDowell, Clark Fork Coalition

Recommendation concerning preparation of EIS No EIS required.

EA prepared by: Mark Lere

Date: July 13, 2010

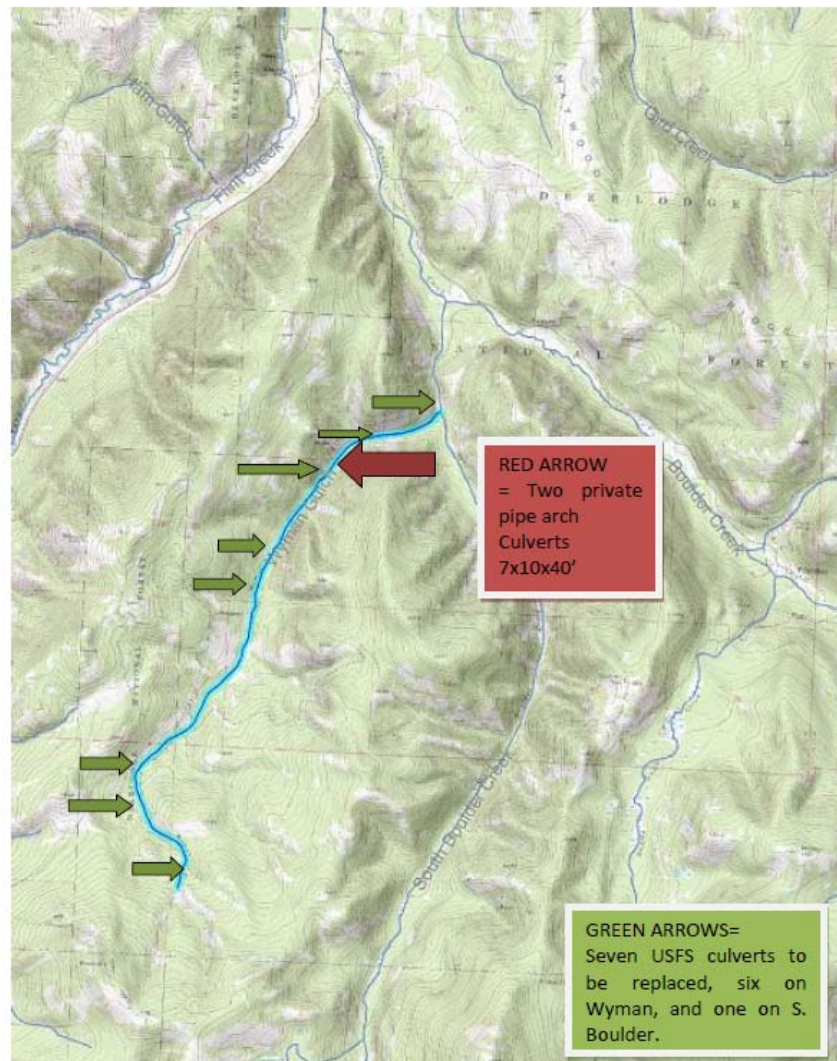
#### LOCATION MAP:

WYMAN GULCH CULVERT REPLACEMENTS

FLINT-BOULDER DRAINAGE, UPPER CLARK FORK

May, 2010 Future Fisheries Proposal

Clark Fork Coalition & USFS-BVDL NF



Map showing location of culverts on Wyman Gulch  
ATTACHMENT 1



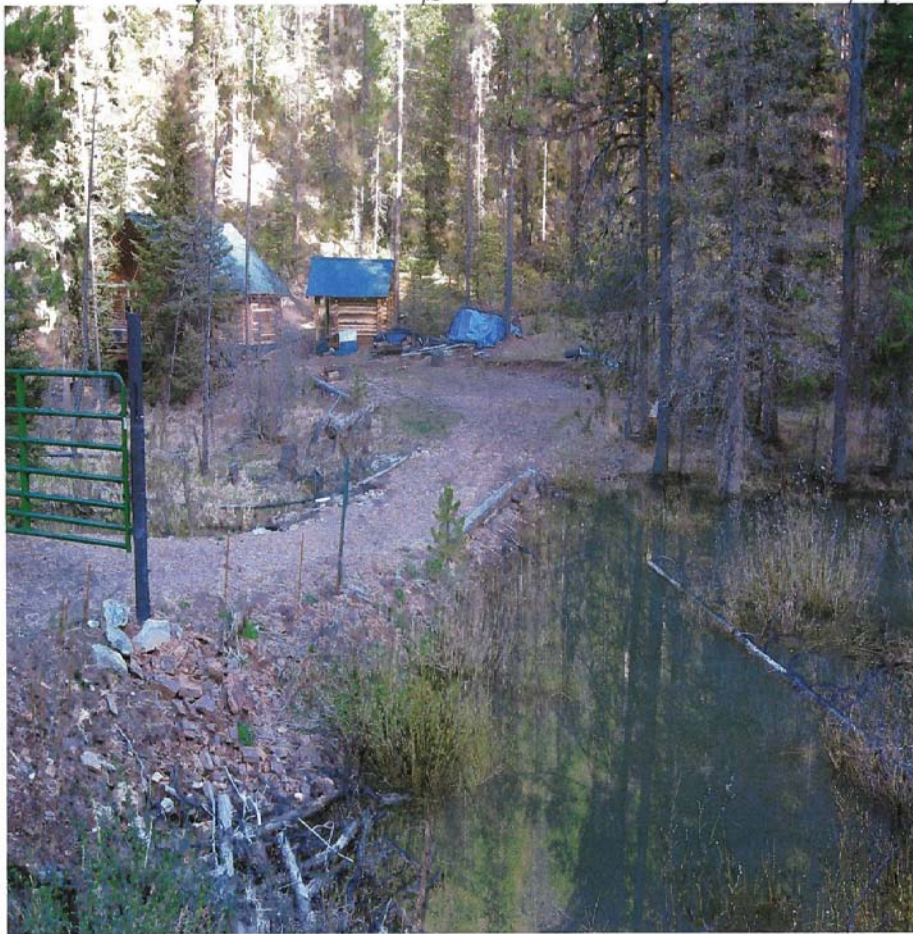


Photo of one of the private road crossings located on Wyman Gulch

## ATTACHMENT 2